



Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International
Organizations in Vienna

**Statement by the Delegation of Ukraine
in response to Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on Gender
Liliana Palihovici**

As for delivery by Ambassador Yevhenii Tsymbaliuk,
Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna,
to the 1383rd meeting of the Permanent Council,
21 July 2022

Mr. Chairperson,

The Delegation of Ukraine welcomes to the Permanent Council Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on Gender Liliana Palihovici and thanks her for providing detailed information on her activities aimed at supporting Ukrainian women refugees, forced to flee Ukraine due to Russia's war of aggression.

We sincerely appreciate your close attention to the issue, as well as your swift and resolute reaction from the very first days of the war. In your statement on 08 March 2022, you stressed: "Russian aggression against Ukraine is leaving millions of hearts scarred and people losing their lives. I condemn this war, together with thousands of refugee women from Ukraine that I have met these past few days in the Republic of Moldova. This madness needs to be stopped now!".

Unfortunately, today, on 148th day of war, your words retain the same relevance.

According to the UNHCR, since 24 February 2022, the Russian invasion of Ukraine has forced one-third of Ukrainians from their homes, which makes it the largest human displacement crisis in the world today.

Some 8 million people have been displaced internally within Ukraine, while more than 6.5 million people have crossed international borders. Approximately 13 million people are estimated to be stranded in affected areas or unable to leave due to the permanent Russian shelling and bombing.

Women and children constitute an estimated 90 per cent of those forced to leave their homes. They remain among the most vulnerable groups.

Their vulnerable situation puts them at risk for various forms of violence, exploitation and trafficking.

Ukraine's current experience has made it clear that the gender dimension of humanitarian assistance is critically important.

We are grateful to all our international partners who provide the necessary assistance and support to Ukrainian refugees.

We underline the need to pay special attention to the fate of hundreds of thousands of Ukrainian citizens and Ukrainian children who have been forcibly displaced to the territory of the Russian Federation in violation of international humanitarian law. Our citizens must not become hostages of the aggressor-state and their rights and freedoms must be duly protected.

Distinguished colleagues,

Despite the unprecedented challenges of the war, Ukraine insistently pursues the development of its gender equality policies, based on highest international standards.

Just a few days ago Ukraine ratified the Council of Europe's Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention). The Convention will enter into force, as regards Ukraine, on 1st November 2022.

The Women, Peace and Security Agenda has always been of the utmost importance for Ukraine. Implementation of the first National Action Plan, adopted under the circumstances of ongoing Russian aggression since 2014, bears witness to the progress made on many indicators, including the positioning of women in senior government and elected representation offices. Some 50 per cent of Ukraine's entrepreneurs are women, and they work to support the country's economy. There are 37,000 women in the Armed Forces of Ukraine, and more than a thousand of them have already become commanders.

Russia's war against Ukraine has made it clear that Ukraine's second National Action Plan, covering the period of 2020-2025, requires serious updates and adjustment to the new security threats. It will be updated against the backdrop of the destruction of civilian infrastructure by the Russian armed forces and war crimes committed by the Russian soldiers against women, in particular the use of sexual violence. On 3 May 2022, Ukraine signed a memorandum with the United Nations identifying areas of cooperation, which will be included in Ukraine's updated national action plan on 1325.

Ukraine closely cooperates with the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. Among the first practical steps is the opening of centers of assistance for war terror survivors. The first one is to be opened soon in cooperation with the UN Population Fund in one of the cities near the frontline.

Several weeks after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, dozens of reports of conflict-related sexual violence committed by the Russian armed forces started to emerge, especially from the areas that had been or continue to be under the Russian occupation. This information was largely confirmed by the UN, the OSCE and several non-governmental organizations. As of 3 June 2022, the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine has received 124 reports of alleged sex crimes, 49 of which against children. However, it is highly likely that current figures do not represent the full picture of conflict-related sexual violence, as many victims may refrain from reporting due to trauma and fear of stigmatization.

As stressed in the ODIHR's report of 20 July 2022, "rape and other forms of sexual violence, when committed in the context of an armed conflict, constitute violations of IHL and amount to war crimes under the ICC Statute." We call for the conduct of rigorous investigation of such heinous crimes to ensure justice and accountability.

Let me conclude by underlining the importance of your, Ms. Palihovici, activities and mandate as Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on Gender, as well as particular responsibility it implies in times of war. We count on your continued support to Ukrainian women and girls.

I thank you, Mr. Chairperson.